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PASTORALISM, PATRIARCHY AND HISTORY: CHANGING GENDER RELATIONS AMONG MAASAI IN TANGANYIKA, 1890–1940*

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DESPITE the substantial and significant body of scholarly work on changing gender relations among African peoples who are (or were) primarily cultivators, the gender relations of predominantly pastoralist peoples have been, with a few notable exceptions, curiously excluded from historical examination.[1] Instead, despite work which has shown the complexities of trying to determine the 'status' of East African pastoralist women, pastoralist gender relations seem to exist outside of history and be immune to change.[2] Earlier anthropological studies that addressed pastoral gender relations applied a synchronic model, analyzing them in terms of either the pastoral mode of production or pastoralist ideology. Harold Schneider, for example, contended that among East African pastoralists, men's control of livestock gave them control of women, who were 'usually thoroughly subordinated to

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[1] These exceptions include H. Moore, *Space, Text and Gender: An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenya* (Cambridge, 1986); S. Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War and the State* (Berkeley, 1996); R. Oboler, *Women, Power and Economic Change: The Nandi of Kenya* (Stanford, 1985).

[2] See, for example, J. H. Driberg, 'The status of women among Nilotics and Nilo-Hamitics', *Africa*, 5 (1932), 404–21; M. Dupire, 'The position of women in a pastoral society', in D. Paulme (ed.), *Women of Tropical Africa* (Berkeley, 1963); G. Klima, 'Jural relations between the sexes among the Barabaig', *Africa*, 34 (1964), 9–20; Y. Elam, *The Social and Sexual Roles of Hima Women* (Manchester, 1973); G. Dahl, *Subsistence and Society of Waso Boran* (Stockholm, 1979); A. Beaman, 'Women's participation in pastoral economy: income maximization among the Rendile', *Nomadic Peoples*, 12 (1983), 20–25; J. Wienpahl, 'Women's roles in livestock production among the Turkana of Kenya', *Research in Economic Anthropology*, 6 (1984), 193–215; the special issue of *Ethnos*, 52 (1987) on pastoralist women, edited by Gudrun Dahl; the special issue of *Human Ecology*, 24 (1996) on gender and livestock in African production systems; and the valuable bibliographic materials compiled by the Institute of Development Anthropology, including M. Horowitz and F. Jowkar, *Pastoral Women and Change in Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia* (Binghamton, 1992); and *idem*, *Gender Relations of Pastoral/Agropastoral Production: A Bibliography with Annotations* (Binghamton, 1991).

men and thus unable to establish independent identity as a production force'.[3] In his rich ethnography of Matapato Maasai, Paul Spencer claimed that both male and female Maasai believe in 'the undisputed right of men to own women as ''possessions'''.[4] Marriage, in his view, was therefore 'the transfer of a woman as a possession from her father who reared her to her husband who rules her'.[5] Melissa Llewelyn-Davies' study of Loita Maasai women in Kenya corroborated Spencer's findings. Loita Maasai women perceived themselves, and were perceived, as 'property', to be bought and sold by men with bridewealth. Llewelyn-Davis argued that 'elder patriarchs' used their control of property rights in women, children and livestock to control the production and reproduction of both livestock and human beings.[6] Similarly, in his symbolic analysis of pastoral Maasai ideology, John Galaty contended that Maasai men were the 'real' pastoralists, while Maasai women were negatively equated with lower status hunters, providing an ideological explanation for their lower status.[7] Thus, whether they attributed their findings to material or ideological sources (or some combination of the two), few anthropologists questioned the 'undisputed right' of contemporary male pastoralists 'to own women as possessions'.[8]

But, one should ask, how did women come to be thought of as 'property', as 'possessions' 'owned' and controlled by men? Based on ethnohistorical research among Maasai in Tanzania, this article demonstrates that contemporary gender relations among pastoralists, which many scholars (myself included) have described as 'patriarchal', are not inherent to pastoralism as a mode of production or an ideology, but the result of a historically particular constellation of interactions involving both British and Maasai ideas and practices.[9] Specifically, I argue that it was during the early period of British

[3] H. Schneider, *Livestock and Equality in East Africa : The Economic Bases for Social Structure* (Bloomington, 1979), 82.

[4] P. Spencer, *The Maasai of Matapato : A Study of Rituals of Rebellion* (Bloomington, 1979), 198. Ironically, Spencer provides evidence within his rich ethnography to contradict such claims.

[5] *Ibid*. 25. More recently, Spencer co-authored a life history of a Maasai woman, Telelia, that provides important insights into the complex relationships of power, authority and respect between Maasai men and women: T. Chieni and P. Spencer, 'The world of Telelia: reflections of a Maasai woman in Matapato', in T. Spear and R. Waller (eds.), *Being Maasai : Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa* (London 1993), 157–73.

[6] M. Llewelyn-Davies, 'Women, warriors, and patriarchs', in S. Ortner and H. Whitehead (eds.), *Sexual Meanings : The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality* (Cambridge, 1981), 330–58.

[7] J. Galaty, 'Pollution and pastoral antipraxis: the issue of Maasai inequality', *American Ethnologist*, 6 (1979), 803–16, especially 810–11.

[8] Historians who have studied Maasai and other East African pastoralists have rarely concerned themselves with changes in pastoralist social organization, much less gender relations.

[9] Bonnie Kettel's important paper on the decline of economic power among Tugen women in Kenya as a result of British development policies prompted some of my early thoughts on these questions. B. Kettel, 'The commoditization of women in Tugen (Kenya) social organization', in C. Robertson and I. Berger (eds.), *Women and Class in Africa* (New York, 1986), 47–61. Other scholars who have addressed aspects of Maasai gender relations include N. Kipuri, 'Maasai women in transition: class and gender in the transformation of a pastoral society' (Ph.D. thesis, Temple University, 1989); A. Talle, *Women at a Loss : Changes in Maasai Pastoralism and their Effects on Gender Relations* (Stockholm, 1988).

colonial state formation that the parameters of male Maasai power expanded to embrace new modes of control and authority, becoming something we might call 'patriarchal'.[10] Although the term 'patriarchy' is ambiguous in that it can name a range of context-specific gendered power relations, it is used here to refer to situations as described above, where men dominate women politically and economically. Such control is relational, never thorough, often contradictory and inconsistent, and maintained through extended negotiations and struggles. In other words, patriarchy, like gender, is produced, maintained and transformed through the cultural and social relations of power between women and men, but also among women and among men. These relations are therefore historically produced at the intersection and through the interplay of local and translocal cultural, social and political–economic forces, including cross-cutting relationships of age, race, nationality, ethnicity and class.[11]

This paper traces the emergence of 'patriarchy' among Maasai to two inter-related processes central to colonial state formation: the division of the complementary, interconnected responsibilities of men and women into spatially separated, hierarchically gendered domains of 'domestic' and 'public'/'political' and the consolidation of male control over cattle through the commodification of livestock, monetization of the Maasai economy and targeting of men for development interventions. Incorporation into the state system reinforced and enhanced male political authority and economic control by expanding the bases for political power and introducing new forms of property relations. Together, these processes shifted the contours of male-female power relations, resulting in the material disenfranchisement and conceptual devaluation of Maasai women as both women and pastoralists.[12]

The objective is to analyze the changing historical, political and economic structures within which gender relations in general and 'patriarchy' (as a type of gender relationship) in particular were constituted, maintained and

[10] There is a vast feminist literature that debates the analytic usefulness of the concept of 'patriarchy' in describing and understanding gender inequality in Africa and elsewhere. Important works include: S. Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford, 1990); S. Stichter and J. Parpart (eds.), *Patriarchy and Class: African Women in the Home and the Workforce* (Boulder, CO, 1988); B. Agarwal (ed.), *Structures of Patriarchy: State, Community, and Household in Modernising Asia* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1988); and E. Schmidt, 'Patriarchy, capitalism, and the colonial state in Zimbabwe', *Signs*, 16 (1991), 732–56.

[11] For other examples of this in Africanist scholarship, see D. Hodgson and S. McCurdy (eds.), *Wayward Wives, Misfit Mothers and Disobedient Daughters: 'Wicked' Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa*, special issue of *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 30 (1996); M. Grosz-Ngate and O. Kokole (eds.), *Gendered Encounters: Challenging Cultural Boundaries and Social Hierarchies in Africa*, (New York and London, 1997).

[12] For analyses of changing gender relations after the Second World War, see D. Hodgson, 'The politics of gender, ethnicity and "development": images, interventions and the reconfiguration of Maasai identities in Tanzania, 1916–1993' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1995); *idem*, 'Embodying the contradictions of modernity: gender and spirit possession among Maasai in Tanzania,' in Grosz-Ngate and Kokole, *Gendered Encounters*, 111–29; *idem*, '"My daughter ... belongs to the government now": marriage, Maasai and the Tanzanian state', in Hodgson and McCurdy, *Wayward Wives*, 106–23.

transformed. Because of a heavy reliance on colonial archival documents to reconstruct this early period, it is difficult to uncover and convey the agency of the Maasai men and women confronting these changes at the time. That these men and women were active in collaborating, contesting, challenging and creating these changes, however, should be obvious. In other work I use a longer time-frame and incorporate interviews and data from my ethnographic field research to explore Maasai women's negotiation of their changing situation through spirit possession and conversion to Christianity, and to investigate Maasai men's incorporation of modernity to produce new modes of masculinity.[13] Ongoing field work among contemporary Maasai reveals that these gendered struggles over power, property and identity continue today.[14]

MAASAI GENDER RELATIONS IN THE 1890S

To understand the changes in Maasai gender relations that occurred during the early British colonial period, we must first examine gender relations on the eve of the colonial encounter. Although Maasai sources are almost non-existent, there is the rich ethnographic account of Moritz Merker, a German military officer who lived and traveled among Maasai in German East Africa (later Tanganyika) from 1895 to 1903.[15] While Merker's time in German East Africa coincided with German colonial rule, it also occurred just after a series of disasters (discussed later) had struck Maasailand. Despite Merker's belief that Maasai were the lost tribe of Israel, the core chapters of his ethnography carefully describe cultural and social aspects of Maasai lives before and after significant changes took place, based on years of observations, interactions and discussions. In using Merker, I am not trying to provide a historical 'pre-colonial' portrait of Maasai, but taking advantage of an opportunity to glimpse their lives in terms of processes that were beginning to take place. To focus the inquiry, the summary of Merker is organized into the four analytically distinct dimensions of power most salient for the historical study of the emergence of patriarchy: social, economic, political and ritual.

Age and gender were the key axes of social organization that distinguished categories of persons and structured their roles, rights and responsibilities.

[13] Hodgson, 'Embodying the contradictions'; *idem*, 'Engendered encounters: men of the church and the church of women in Maasailand, Tanzania, 1950–1993', unpublished manuscript; *idem*, '"Once intrepid warriors": modernity and the production of Maasai masculinities', unpublished manuscript.

[14] Hodgson, 'Politics of gender', especially chs. 7–9.

[15] First published in 1904, Merker's *Die Masai: Ethnographische Monographie eines ostafrikanischen Semitenvolkes* (Berlin) was partly revised and expanded for a second edition in 1910. My references are to the 1910 edition, using an extremely accurate English translation (author unknown) in the Spiritan House Library in Arusha (Tanzania), verified and supplemented by the additional translation assistance of Lisa Vanderlinden. Merker's ethnography is particularly valuable because it offers a picture of Maasai life in Tanganyika not Kenya at the time. Other scholars of Maasai have also acknowledged the rich detail of his ethnography. See J. Bernsten, 'The enemy is us: eponymy in the historiography of the Maasai', *History in Africa*, 7 (1980), 1–21; R. Waller, 'Lords of East Africa: the Maasai in the mid-nineteenth century (*c.* 1840–*c.* 1885)' (Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 1978).

To ensure minimal ambiguity, each category of person was visibly marked by distinct clothing, hairstyles and ornamentation, and linguistically differentiated in greetings and other nomenclature.[16] For men, differences in age were marked formally by designated age grades (*olaji/ilajijik*), a set of life stages that men moved through as part of their age-set, or group of men, known by a unique name, who were circumcised during the same time period. Although women were not formally divided by age grades, their progression from young girls (*endito/intoyie*) to old grandmothers (*koko*) was marked linguistically and often ritually.[17]

Relationships between men and women varied by their age, kinship, clan and age-set affiliations, but they were generally based on mutual respect (*enkanyit*) and relative autonomy. For example, Merker produced two detailed tables listing the proper forms of address among females, among males, and between males and females of different ages, reflecting degrees of familiarity and formality (most of which are still used today). Improper greetings (implying disrespect) could elicit sharp rebukes: 'the word *esiangiki* sometimes means legal wife; I have more than once heard a young wife answer someone not entitled to use the phrase by shouting in annoyance: "I am not your *esiangiki*"'.[18] But 'improper' behavior, especially of a wife to her husband, could elicit more than a verbal rebuke: 'light' wife-beating was prevalent.[19] Men and women who were unhappy in their marriage had some recourse, however; 'divorce' was possible, although it was more common for a wife and husband to live in permanent separation, even within the same homestead.[20]

Gender and age prescribed whether one lived in an *emanyata*, or 'warrior's village' as Merker calls it, or *enkang'*, a 'family village' (which I call a homestead). *Ilmurran* (young, circumcised men of the 'warrior' age grade) lived in the *emanyata*, accompanied by their mothers and their 'girlfriends', the *intoyie*. Married men, women and children lived in the *enkang'*. Neither men nor women, however, were confined to the *enkang'*. Men traveled to neighboring homesteads, visiting members of their age-set, fellow clan elders and other friends, relatives and stock-partners to discuss clan and locality affairs, exchange news and information and arrange livestock grazing and watering matters.[21] Women traveled to markets and trading settlements or to visit friends and relatives at neighboring homesteads.

Age was not, however, the only salient difference among men and women. Both men and women garnered more or less prestige according to their homestead's wealth in stock, number of children and overall reputation for successful management of their domestic affairs. Individual men earned respect according to their speaking abilities, their generosity and other valued traits. Similarly, women achieved varying degrees of respect and authority according to their position in the order of wives (a first wife having

[16] Merker provides detailed descriptions of these sartorial and linguistic markings in *Die Masai*, chs. 3, 8, 16.

[17] Merker, however, claims that girls circumcised between the beginning of the circumcision of one age-grade of males and the beginning of the next were considered members of the first age-grade: Merker, *Die Masai*, 72. [18] *Ibid.* 71. [19] *Ibid.* 120.

[20] *Ibid.* 49.

[21] Some Maasai men traveled even further afield, appearing in the Berlin Exhibition of 1886: *ibid.* 119.

authority over other wives) and their ability to manage their household property (including livestock) and concerns. 'The head wife,' according to Merker,

> is the best off, for her husband hands over to her a large part of his cattle for all her needs, and also marks her out from amongst the other wives by gifts of clothing and ornaments, and by treating her with greater consideration. Her eldest son has privileges of inheritance [of the father's auxiliary herd]. The head wife exercises control over the other wives and keeps them to their work when they are neglectful.[22]

As families, Maasai was also stratified by relative wealth. Merker describes the average married man as having five to six wives, adding that 'rich men' had even more.[23] The discrepancy in wealth had its redistributive consequences, however; boys from poorer families worked as herders for wealthier families until they had earned a small herd of cattle for themselves, and rich men often paid up to four cattle more in bridewealth than others.[24]

For those Maasai who were predominantly pastoralists, Merker's ethnography and other reports of the late 1800s portray their production system as organized by age and gender.[25] Maasai men and women held separate roles and responsibilities in the care and management of cattle and smallstock (sheep and goats). Adult women cared for calves, smallstock and sick animals. They milked cattle (and sometimes smallstock) in the morning and evening and controlled the distribution of milk to household members and visitors. They maintained the right to trade any surplus milk. Women also processed animal skins, and either made clothing or sleeping skins from the hides or traded them. Young boys usually herded livestock; *ilmurran* guarded people and livestock from raids, attacks and wild animals; and elder

[22] *Ibid*. 27–28. [23] *Ibid*. 27. [24] *Ibid*. 60, 45.

[25] These additional accounts include O. Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle: Reisen und Forschungen der Massai-Expedition des deutschen Antisklaverei-Komite in den Jahren 1891–93* (Berlin, 1894); J. L. Krapf, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours During an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa*, (2nd ed., London, 1969 [1860]); J. P. Farler, 'Native routes in East Africa from Pangani to the Masai Country and the Victoria Nyanza', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 4 (1882), 730–42, 776 (map); T. Wakefield, 'Native routes through the Masai country', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 4 (1882), 742–7; *idem*, 'The Wakwafi raid on the district near Mombasa', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 5 (1883), 289–90; J. T. Last, 'The Masai people and country', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 4 (1882), 224–26; *idem*, 'A visit to the Masai people living beyond the borders of Nguru country', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 5 (1883), 517–43, 568 (map); J. Thomson, *Through Masai Land* (London, 1968 [1885]); and H. H. Johnston, *The Kilima-Njaro Expedition: A Record of Scientific Exploration in Eastern Equatorial Africa* (London, 1886). As John Bernsten cautions, these early missionary and traveler reports must be used carefully, since many accounts are based on second-hand information reported by Swahili traders, non-Maasai Africans or coastal missionaries. Furthermore, of those authors who did visit Maasailand, few spoke Maa and most stayed for only a very short time (e.g. three days in the case of Last): Bernsten, 'The Enemy is us'. Most scholars agree that while the majority of Maa-speakers were originally agro-pastoralists, cultivating sorghum and millet and raising cattle and smallstock, in time a group emerged with an increasing specialization in pastoralism and a heightened sense of their distinct identity based on their mode of production. J. Sutton, 'Becoming Maasailand,' in Spear and Waller, *Being Maasai*, 38–60; J. Galaty, 'Maasai expansion and the new East African pastoralism', in Spear and Waller, *Being Maasai*, 61–86.

men made the broad management decisions about the timing and location of grazing and watering the herds.

In addition to the rights of women to cattle products such as milk and hides, husbands and wives shared overlapping rights in livestock, depending in part on how, from whom, and by whom an animal was first obtained. Cattle were given for bridewealth and wedding ceremonies, loaned or exchanged to build patron–client or stock–partner relations, and contributed to ceremonies, fine payments and feasts. Goats and sheep were circulated even more constantly for the above reasons, as well as traded for food, beads, wire and other necessities. Husbands and wives conferred and agreed on decisions to slaughter, trade or give an animal away. Although men were the primary exchangers of livestock, women also gave livestock (usually smallstock, but occasionally cattle) to one another and to men. A man's first wife, for example, gave his new second or third wife a calf, 'after which they called one another *paashe*, i.e. the giver and receiver of a calf'.[26] As for smallstock, oral evidence suggests that men and women shared rights in some animals and held individual rights to others. When a woman married, her husband transferred a certain amount of cattle to her as 'house-property', to be managed by her for her household's immediate benefit in terms of milk and hides, but also to be kept in custody for her son's inheritance.

The ability of Maasai to sustain their specialized production system depended in great part on women's roles as traders. Although Maasai depended on the milk and blood of their cattle and the meat of smallstock for subsistence, most Maasai (other than *ilmurran*, who had strict dietary restrictions) supplemented their diet with grains and other foodstuffs, especially during the dry season. Women created and maintained links with neighboring agricultural groups, trading surplus milk, hides, smallstock and even donkeys for needed grain and foodstuffs.[27] Women's trade took two forms: they either traveled alone or in small groups to markets or the large, permanent trading settlements like Taveta and Moshi to barter their wares, or they traded with groups of old non-Maasai women who passed through their homestead every three to six days laden with maize, bananas and sweet potatoes.[28] Thomson described one such trader: 'a woman, well dressed in bullock's hide and loaded with wire, breads and chains, appears driving a donkey before her as she wends her way fearlessly towards Kibonoto to buy the vegetable food eaten by married people and children'.[29] Besides foodstuffs, Maasai traded hides, milk, livestock, provisions and ivory for tobacco, cloth, glass beads and copper wire from Swahili traders who traveled in large armed trade caravans through their areas, as well as at permanent trading settlements.[30] Tobacco, for example, was popular with Maasai men and

[26] A. Hollis, *The Masai: Their Language and Folklore* (London, 1905), 303.

[27] Merker, *Die Masai*, 30; Thomson, *Through Masai Land*, 259–60; H. Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History* (London 1977), 112–26.

[28] Merker, *Die Masai*, 30; Thomson, *Through Masailand*, 259, 260; Baumann, *Durch Massailand*, 242; Johnston, *Kilima-Njaro*, 404; T. Spear, *Mountain Farmers* (Oxford, 1997), 41.

[29] Thomson, *Through Masailand*, 93.

[30] Farler, 'Native routes', 736; Krapf, *Travels*, 364; Merker, *Die Masai*, 212–3. Wakefield describes several trade routes based on information provided to him by caravan leaders: T. Wakefield, 'Routes of native caravans from the coast to the interior of eastern Africa', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 40 (1870), 303–39; *idem*, 'Native routes'; Johnston, *Kilima-Njaro*, 404.

women, who would trade one goat skin for about two half-pound packets of tobacco. In addition, although Maasai still preferred to wear leather prepared by women instead of the cloth offered by ivory traders, a few had discovered one item they liked – umbrellas – which they used to shelter themselves from the heat of the sun.[31] In the nineteenth century, Maasai women were therefore crucial intermediaries in the extensive and active trade networks that enabled Maasai to sustain their specialized production strategy by linking them to the commodities of regional and global commerce.

Like production, political power was also structured by gender and age. As men grew older, their political power as arbitrators of community and clan disputes increased as well, peaking when they were elders/senior elders. Women followed a similar trajectory of increasing respect and power through their lives. As young uncircumcised girls (*endito/intoyie*), they worked hard helping their mothers in childcare and other household chores, and collecting wood and water but they also played hard, flirting, dancing, singing and sleeping with their lovers, the *ilmurran*. Once circumcised, girls became adult women and were soon married. As married women, they carried out many of the duties described above. As their children grew older, they gained respect, especially once their sons became *ilmurran*.[32] And when their sons began to marry and they became mothers-in-law, their authority increased and their workload decreased as they managed their daughters-in-law. These same sons and daughters-in-law would in turn care for these women when they became elderly and feeble *koko* (grandmothers).

Politically, men and women were responsible for different spheres of interaction. Men occupied certain recognized leadership positions as representatives (*ilaigwenak*) of their age-grades (*ilajijik*), sections (*iloshon*) and clans (*ilgilatin*), and were responsible for consulting each other, making decisions and settling disputes about matters between homesteads, clans and communities. Women had varying degrees of involvement in these decisions: they could initiate, attend and testify at judicial proceedings;[33] encourage their adult sons to advocate certain positions; lobby and confer with their husbands or directly speak their minds when men gathered in their homes to discuss their affairs over milk or alcohol. For their part, adult women, especially elder women and senior wives, were responsible for settling disputes and controlling the behavior of younger women and children in order to ensure a peaceful life within their households and homesteads. They were also central players in negotiating the marriage alliances and arrangements of their sons and daughters.[34] Although they shared common objectives, men and women granted each other autonomy, premised on mutual respect, to pursue and manage their own affairs. As Merker commented on women's freedom and mobility as traders: 'in this she is in no way supervised by her husband. It is beneath his dignity to concern himself with such matters'.[35]

Although there were distinctions of behavior, attitude and dress between the more 'domestic' spaces of home and homestead and the 'public' spaces

[31] Merker, *Die Masai*, 136.

[32] For a compelling account of the power and authority contemporary pastoral women achieve through being mothers, see B. Bianco, 'Women and things: Pokot motherhood as political destiny', *American Ethnologist*, 18 (1991), 770–85.

[33] Merker, *Die Masai*, 220. [34] *Ibid.* 44. [35] *Ibid.* 30.

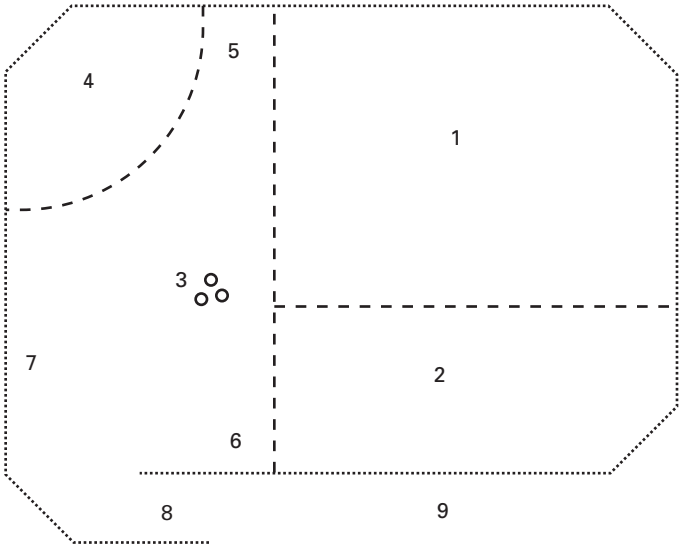

Fig. 1. Maasai house *c.* 1890, based on Merker, *Die Masai*, 24. Key: 1. husband's bed (*erruat kitok*); 2. wife's bed (*erruat kiti*); 3. hearth; 4. calf pen; 5. household goods; 6. smallstock pen; 7. firewood; 8. outer room; 9. outside periphery.

outside their borders, neither domain was gendered as primarily male or female or reflected significant differences of power or access between men and women. Both men and women occupied sections of the domestic sphere and traversed and congregated in the more communal 'public' spaces beyond the homestead. Furthermore, the domestic/public distinction does not adequately express either the range of zones of intimacy and informality or their complex intersections.

Each house was spatially divided into several zones (Fig. 1). The most 'private' spaces were the separate, enclosed wife's bed (*erruat kiti*, lit. 'small bed') and husband's bed (*erruat kitok*, lit. 'large bed'). A woman slept with her children in her bed, while a man (or visiting agemate) slept in the larger bed. A less intimate but still private space was the inner room of the house surrounding the hearth in which a woman cooked, stored her household belongings and penned young smallstock and calves at night. Only men and women with whom the woman was familiar had access to this space: her husband, family members, agemates of her husband, co-wives and other women friends. In order to demonstrate their respect, her father, senior male relatives and more formal guests sat in the 'public' outer foyer or just outside the entrance to the house. More public still was the outside perimeter of the house, in which groups of men or women would sit together in the daytime.[36] Thus the private/public spatial distinction was not equivalent to a domestic/political distinction of power, nor was it clearly gendered or hierarchical.[37]

[36] *Ibid.* 25.

[37] There is a large feminist literature on the domestic/public dichotomy. Some authors see the distinction as a central explanatory principle for the 'universal' subordination of women, who were always confined to the less prestigious domestic sphere. J. Collier and M. Rosaldo, 'Politics and gender in simple societies', in S. Ortner and H. Whitehead (eds.), *Sexual Meanings* (Cambridge, 1981). Such an explanation assumes that such

Finally, although men certainly exercised greater formal power and authority in the political realm, women were central to the ritual sphere. Men would pray on occasion, and the *iloibonok* (spiritual leaders and diviners) were male, but it was women who were responsible for constantly mediating the relationship between Maasai and their God (*Ng'ai*). Women prayed at least twice a day, in the morning and evening, to *Ng'ai* 'for having protected her and hers, and entreats him further to protect, preserve and increase the stock, and also to send her many children'.[38] (Although Merker marks *Ng'ai* as male, the term is actually gendered female in the Maasai language. Contemporary research suggests that *Ng'ai* has both female and male aspects.)[39] Women also played central roles in the numerous rituals that marked life stage transitions, such as the birth of children, naming ceremonies, circumcision rites, the passage of groups of men from one set of age-grade statuses to another and 'peace-making' ceremonies of neighboring groups.[40] Although not specifically 'political', women's religious and ritual activities were power-laden in that they reflected and expressed moral authority.

Merker's detailed descriptions of gender relations therefore suggest that 'patriarchal' may be a deeply problematic term by which to characterize Maasai gender relations during this period. Although men, especially elder men, served as the primary leaders and arbitrators for their communities, the responsibilities and interactions of men and women were complementary and interdependent. Like the spokes of a wheel, each category of person, whether young boys or old women, was required to fulfill its responsibilities for livestock and for each other to ensure the survival and progress of Maasai households, homesteads and communities. While Merker himself was fixated on seeing Maasai women as 'wives', his own evidence showed the many ways in which they exercised power and authority as pastoralists, mothers, sisters and mothers-in-law. He continually asserts that Maasai wives were 'subordinate' in status to their husbands, but admits that '[n]aturally Maasai wives do not recognize their menial position as such, for they do not know otherwise, and fortunately, unknown amenities cannot be missed'.[41]

There is in fact no evidence that women perceived themselves or were perceived as the 'property' or 'possessions' of men. Instead, Merker presents substantial evidence of the autonomy and mutual respect of women and men, the pride of women in their identity as pastoralists and their deep satisfaction with their lives and relationships. If anything, adult married

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distinctive spheres are universally present and unchanging through history. For critiques of such 'universalist' arguments, see S. Yanagisako 'Family and household: the analysis of domestic groups', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 8 (1979), 161–205; J. Comaroff, '*Sui genderis*: feminism, kinship theory and structural ''domains''', in J. Collier and S. Yanagisako (eds.), *Gender and Kinship* (Stanford, 1987), 53–85.

[38] Merker, *Die Masai*, 207.

[39] The most thorough study of Maasai women's religious expression and participation is J. Voshaar, 'Tracing God's walking stick in Maa; a study of Maasai society, culture and religion' (Ph.D thesis, Catholic University of Nijmegen, 1979). See also D. Hodgson, 'Engendered encounters'.

[40] Merker, *Die Masai*, 52, 56, 59, 104, 208–9. A woman from each group would exchange an unweaned child with one another, briefly nurse the infant and then return him or her. *Ibid*. 102–3.

[41] *Ibid*. 120.

women were the centralized node around which other people – 'the spokes' – revolved and joined together. As the builders and 'owners' of their homes, women provided the spaces for men, children and guests to sleep, eat and congregate.[42] Their spatial centrality was paralleled by their centrality to ritual relationships with *Ng'ai*, as daily mediators through song and prayer on behalf of themselves and their families.

Women's autonomy and mobility in this period is further demonstrated by reports of their free and fearless interactions with European travelers. For instance, after a brief visit by a Maasai 'chief' in 1883, the traveler Joseph Thomson describes how the next group of Maasai to visit him was a delegation of Maasai women returning from a trip to trade for food with Chaga farmers. The women entered the camp carrying grass (a sign of peaceful intentions). They greeted and chatted with the men in the camp, looked at and touched Thomson with great curiosity and eventually informed him that after a great debate a deputation of men would visit 'to interview' him the following day.[43] Other travelers describe similarly free and relaxed encounters with Maasai women at the time, with some even hinting that women's freedom of movement included the sexual freedom to spend the night in camp with the porters. Baumann, for example, writes of 'the easy approachability of the caravan members and other indigenous peoples to the Maasai women, [which] leads to a large influx of foreign blood into the Maasai'.[44]

IN THE SHADOW OF THE COLONIAL STATE

Maasai life, as described by Merker, was radically disrupted on the eve of the colonial encounter. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Maasai peoples and herds, like others in East Africa, were struck by a series of disasters, including bovine pleuropneumonia (BPP) in 1883, rinderpest in 1891 and smallpox in 1892.[45] Large numbers of Maasai people and cattle died during the epidemics and ensuing famines and wars between Maasai sections.[46] Although the impact of these epidemics had a disparate impact in

[42] For a provocative analysis of the centrality of women and female-controlled spaces to Marakwet life, see Moore, *Space*. Other accounts of the centrality of the female-dominated household to pastoral life include G. Dahl, 'Mats and milk pots: the domain of Borana women', in A. Jacobson-Widding and W. Van Beek (eds.), *The Creative Communion: African Folk Models of Fertility and the Regeneration of Life* (Stockholm, 1990), 129–36; M. de Bruijn, 'The hearthold in pastoral Fulbe society, central Mali: social relations, milk and drought', *Africa*, 67 (1997), 625–51.

[43] Thomson, *Through Masailand*, 89.

[44] Baumann, *Durch Masailand*, 165. See also Johnston, *Kilima-Njaro*, 425; Last, 'A visit', 525–6; Thomson, *Through Masai Land*, 95, 160.

[45] For a detailed analysis of these crises, see R. Waller, '*Emutai*: crisis and response in Maasailand, 1883–1902', in D. Johnson and D. Anderson (eds.), *The Ecology of Survival: Case Studies from Northeast African History* (Boulder, 1988). See also J. Koponen, 'Population: a dependent variable', in G. Maddox, J. Giblin and I. Kimambo (eds.), *Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania* (London, 1996), 19–42, esp. 24–5.

[46] R. Waller, '*Emutai*', 101–5. Cf. A. Jacobs, 'The traditional political organization of the pastoral Maasai' (Ph.D. thesis, Oxford University, 1965), 96; J. Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1979), 124–5; and Koponen, 'Population', 593. See also Merker, *Die Masai*, 271.

Maasai areas, the direct consequences of these crises for social organization in general and gender relations in particular were dramatic. Men (and perhaps some women) encouraged female kin to marry Arusha Maasai and other cultivators in exchange for cattle to rebuild their herds; older boys left their families to work as herders and laborers for more fortunate neighbors and relatives; children were offered to passing caravans in exchange for food or just left by the wayside for sympathetic strangers to adopt and Maasai warriors intensified their raiding to replenish their lost herds.[47] Married and unmarried women returned to their families, allied themselves with relatively prosperous cultivators or fled to Nairobi and other towns to work as traders and prostitutes.[48] Many families dispersed to the more fertile coastal areas in search of food. Some families became hunter-gatherers with hopes of returning to pastoralism in the future, while others requested land from Arusha Maasai relatives or stock friends and settled down as cultivators.[49]

These crises in social organization and reproduction of Maasai life coincided with the beginning of colonial rule. Formalized by the Anglo-German agreement of 1890, German rule of Tanganyika was very uneven, concentrating on a few accessible productive regions, with limited sustained involvement in peripheral areas like Maasailand.[50] The period of German rule is not my focus here, in part because of the scarcity of evidence, but more because of the limited long term impact. The Germans did, however, introduce Maasai to some of the procedures and practices of state rule, many of which were continued and expanded by the British. They created a mediating administrative apparatus with the appointment of *jumbes* ('headmen') to implement and supervise German directives, tried to control Maasai raiding and 'illegal' movement through the presence of German military stations and punitive raids by German soldiers with African auxiliaries, and formed a Maasai Reserve so as to alienate Maasai land for European settlement.[51]

Maasai responses to the disasters and German administration culminated in several long term changes to Maasai social organization. Among the social changes that Merker reported for the post-disaster period were shifts in residence patterns such that several families now lived together, a relaxation of clan endogamous marriage prohibitions, sharply reduced bridewealth payments and increased intermarriage of Maasai with neighboring

[47] Baumann describes how Maasai parents would offer him their children in exchange for meat. When Baumann refused, the adults abandoned their children in the camp. 'Soon our caravan was swarming with Masai children and it was touching to see how the porters cared for the little urchins. I employed some of the stronger men and women as cowherds and thus saved quite a number from death by starvation'. *Durch Masailand*, 32. Waller, '*Emutai*', 94–7.

[48] Maasai prostitutes were reported to be working in Nairobi at this time: L. White, *The Comforts of Home : Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago, 1990), 34.

[49] Merker, *Die Masai*, 10, 30.

[50] For an exhaustive study of the German colonial period in Tanganyika, see J. Koponen, *Development for Exploitation : German Colonial Policies in Mainland Tanzania, 1884–1914* (Helsinki, 1994). See also J. Iliffe, *Tanganyika Under German Rule 1905–1912* (Cambridge, 1969).

[51] The small number is in itself a testament to their inability to effectively carry out their duties. Merker, *Die Masai*, 271; Great Britain Admiralty, *A Handbook of German East Africa* (London, *c.* 1915); Koponen, *Development*, 648–9.

cultivators.[52] Elopement was also fairly common at this time, a sign of the disruption of mechanisms of social control of parents over children.[53] But the most striking sign of social disorder were claims by his Maasai informants that venereal diseases were virtually unknown before the cattle plague. Their implication that the dispersion and sexual intermingling of Maasai with non-Maa speaking peoples caused contagion is echoed in similar accounts about the foreign origins of sprit possession at the time.[54]

BRITISH COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF PATRIARCHAL AUTHORITY

After World War I, the British took over Tanganyika, first informally, then formally under a League of Nations mandate in 1920. Although the Germans had created a rudimentary administrative apparatus, which introduced Maasai to some of the forms and effects of state power, it was the British who instituted and elaborated the multifaceted modes of direct and indirect intervention into Maasai lives upon which first the colonial state and later the post-colonial state were forged.

Making 'native authorities'

The implementation of indirect rule among Maasai, as elsewhere, was a frustrating and difficult process subject to constant re-evaluation and restructuring as administrators expended their limited resources and personnel to produce order and exercise control in the face of evasion, resistance and challenge on the part of Maasai men and women.[55] From the beginning, administrators assumed that 'traditional' 'native' authorities were elder men and therefore targeted them as intermediaries in channeling information and exerting control over other Maasai. In 1916, E. D. Browne, the District Political Officer at the time, appointed three sympathetic Maasai men as 'agents' to replace the German-appointed *jumbes*. He made it a policy, however, to consult with the elders and *ilaigwenak* (traditional leaders) on 'tribal matters', and bragged that 'these elders were taught that they, as men of influence, must lead their people and co-operate with Government'.[56] This system was revised in 1922 to incorporate the *Oloiboni* (a spiritual leader, prophet and healer; referred to as 'Laibon' by administrators) as the 'Chief of the Masai' to provide a focal point of authority for the agents and elders.[57] A key impetus for this change came from Maasai themselves: a deputation of Maasai men requested that Parit, the son of Laibon Lenana,

[52] Merker, *Die Masai*, 10, 32, 45, 46–7.

[53] *Ibid.* 46.

[54] Hodgson, 'Embodying', 113.

[55] These shifts are described in great detail elsewhere, but for the purposes of the present argument, a summary will suffice. See Hodgson, 'Politics of gender', chs. 3–5.

[56] Browne (Provincial Commissioner [PC]/Northern Province [NP]), 'Memorandum on the formation of the Masai reserve and the administration of the Masai, 1916–1925', 15 Mar. 1926, Tanzania National Archives (Dar es Salaam) [TNA] 17/37.

[57] In this paper, I capitalize 'Laibon' to distinguish the major Laibons recognized by all Maasai as supreme ritual figures from the many minor laibons (most from the Inkidong'i subclan) who practiced (and still practice) lesser forms of divination and prophecy.

who lived in the East African Protectorate (Kenya), be allowed to move from Kenya to Tanganyika and 'act as Laibon and Chief of all the Masai in the Territory'.[58]

Once indirect rule was formalized as the administrative policy for Tanganyika in 1926, the Acting Provincial Commissioner requested that the District Officer for Masai District report on 'traditional' Maasai tribal organization in order to search for the 'ultimate authority in the tribe'.[59] In his report, the DO characterized Maasai as having 'an essentially democratic organisation' with no office that could be regarded as a 'hereditary chiefship'. Because of his spiritual and prophetic powers, the Laibon would always be consulted on important matters, but he was not a chief as such with the power to decide 'tribal matters'. The report then proceeded to describe three other groups who had legitimate authority to exercise executive and judicial powers among Maasai: the 'Aigwenak' (*ilaigwenak*) who served as the designated representative, arbitrators and advisors for each male age-grade; the 'Aunoni' (*olaunoni*) who served as the chosen 'chief of his ''age'', in whom executive authority [was] really centred, for his own ''age'' only'; and, finally, elder men.[60] As a result of the report, a new system of indirect rule was implemented, comprised of a council of elder men representing different geographic areas and headed by the Laibon.[61] In 1938, in response to some disagreements which had arisen between the elders and the Laibon, the government took advantage of the death of Laibon Mbeiya to restructure the Maasai Native Administration and shift the Laibon into an advisory role. The result was to further strengthen the authority of select male elders.[62] This system, with several minor readjustments, remained much the same until the 1950s.

Colonial interests in maintaining and extending administrative controls were intimately bound up with, and dependent on, the authority and control exercised by elder men. In the Maasai case, ongoing colonial anxieties about the threat posed by dangerous, disorderly warriors strengthened their desire to reinforce the power of elder men and the native authorities. As the DO noted: 'the present ''age'' of warriors … has come into power under unique circumstances, and ones which I am of opinion would constitute a menace to the peace of the country, unless steps were taken to ensure that a real strong native administration was existent'[63]

On their part, elder men encouraged administrative fears of *ilmurran* in order to bolster their own authority over younger men, and they appealed to administrators to intercede when their authority over men or women was in

[58] Browne, 'Memorandum'. Who comprised this delegation and why they wanted to bring the Laibon is unclear. Perhaps they wanted yet one more barrier between themselves and the administration, or they wished to dilute the power of the headmen.

[59] Mitchell (Acting [Ag]PC/NP) to Chief Secretary [CS]/Dar, 16 Mar. 1927, TNA 17/43.

[60] Murrells reminded the PC that 'the Masai are as a general rule, respecters of age, and that many of their difficulties are settled by them, in council with elders, not necessarily Aigwenak, by discussion and agreement'. Murrells (District Officer [DO]/ Maasai District [MaD]) to PC/NP, 28 Feb. 1927, TNA 69/55/MS.

[61] Browne (PC/NP) to CS/Dar, 15 Mar. 1926, TNA 17/37; Mitchell (AG PC/NP) to CS/Dar, 16 Mar. 1927, TNA 17/43.

[62] Page-Jones (DO/MaD) to PC/NP, 5 Dec. 38, TNA 69/47/MS/2.

[63] Murrells (DO/MaD) to PC/NP, 16 Sept. 1930, TNA 69/47/MS.

question.[64] In 1930, a dispute arose between Laibon Mbeiya and certain factions of Maasai elders over the Laibon's preference for the company of warriors and his contemptuous treatment of a delegation of elders bringing him tribute (*olamal*). Although this grievance, combined with the Laibon's 'general disregard of the elders', was a worry to the administration, the 'truly dangerous state of affairs' was 'the predominant position to which the young warriors were being raised in the Councils of the Laibon'.[65] Murrells, the District Officer, intervened immediately. He counseled an influential elder to apologize for a threat he had made that was 'most insulting and entirely subversive of the Laibon's authority', and he met privately with Laibon Mbeiya:

> I instructed him that these practices of his were to cease at once, and that he was once again to establish friendly contact with the elders, and that his present practice of surrounding himself with a bunch of irresponsible young men, and excluding respected and wise elders was regarded by me with no favorable eye.[66]

What is remarkable is not only that the elders seem to have requested the administration's assistance in resolving this dispute, but that administrators complied so quickly and forcefully in what some might have considered 'private' matters.

The implementation of indirect rule, however ineffectual and frustrating it may have seemed to the British at times, was a key factor in reshaping the relationships of autonomy, mutual respect and interdependency between Maasai men and women. By extending the authority of men, especially elder men, over the newly emerging domain of 'the political', indirect rule broadened and deepened their control over junior men and women. It gave certain men new rights and responsibilities as 'representatives' of their communities, including the authority to collect taxes, enforce livestock decisions and codify customary law. Now elder men met not only to arbitrate inter- and intra-community disputes, but to debate and decide on colonial policy proposals and demands. As mediators with the emergent state, these men were able to exploit their new duties and opportunities to assert their political will.

Administrators read the absence of women from the 'political' spheres of public meetings and delegations as a lack of involvement in politics because of their 'greater' concern with the female domains of domestic life. But this gendered separation did not just happen because the British imposed their own model of gender relationships on that held by Maasai; Maasai gender domains overlapped significantly with those of the colonizers. Since all of the colonizers were men, Maasai protocols of respectful behavior prescribed that Maasai of the same gender and roughly the same age interact with them

[64] Other examples of the collaborative relationships between African elder men and male colonial administrators are detailed in M. Chanock, 'Making customary law: men, women and courts in colonial Northern Rhodesia', in M. J. Hay and M. Wright (eds.), *African Women and the Law: Historical Perspectives* (Boston, 1982); *idem*, *Law Custom and Social Order: The Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia* (Cambridge, 1985); M. Mbilinyi, 'Runaway wives: forced labour and forced marriage in colonial Rungwe', *International Journal of Sociology of Law*, 16 (1988), 1–29. For a study of contemporary attempts by male elders to ally themselves with the state in controlling their 'disobedient' daughters, see Hodgson, 'My daughter'.

[65] Murrells (DO/MaD) to PC/NP, 1 May 1930, TNA 69/47/MS. [66] *Ibid.*

in formal spheres such as public meetings. As with the British, Maasai men and women occupied separate realms on most public occasions. But these realms were not necessarily unequal or conceived of as distinctly 'political' or 'domestic'. The association between elder Maasai men and male British administrators was thus partly a consequence of the gendered nature of colonial administration itself. Although Maasai women and British men were curious about one another, in general, young married women kept their distance, while older women, especially grandmothers and post-menopausal women, could interact in a freer and less-constrained manner.

Conversely, as would be expected from Maasai gender protocols, Maasai women considered European women to be their allies and associates in public settings.[67] Jane Fosbrooke wrote of her numerous encounters with Maasai women when she lived and traveled with her husband Henry, an Assistant District Officer in Masai District from 1934–35.[68] On one trip to a village in southern Maasailand, Jane described how a group of women approached her as soon as Henry went into a store to hear a dispute:

> Meanwhile I stayed by the lorry and the Masai women came and chattered … When they saw me they said 'Mzungu' (European) and were very intrigued and begged me to show them my hair, at which they exclaimed Ah! Ah! The shopkeeper sent down some tea and a generous amount of sugar. They indicated that a little would be appreciated, so I let them help themselves. They lapped it up, and smacked their lips. I tried them on bananas – some liked them and asked for more, others made awful faces and the rest laughed. Then they inspected the lorry, especially the headlights, horn and mirror in which they admired themselves with more expression of Ah! Ah! Then Henry emerged …[69]

The curiosity and fearless interaction of the Maasai women with Jane could hardly be mistaken for docility or shyness. A month later a delegation of twenty Maasai women visited her in Loliondo demanding money to purchase sugar for a new-born baby. When Jane, at the advice of her Maasai carpenter and after asking her husband's permission, offered three shillings, the women were overtly disgruntled:

> They talk an awful lot and won't take it. Jane gets interpreter. 'It's not enough they want ten shillings!' Jane departs to house *with* the three shillings. Deputations from the Masai women saying that after all they would like the three shillings. Nothing doing. At last they send the Masai headman who intimated it was all a mistake and they would be so very grateful for the three shillings. So Jane relents and gives him the three shillings.[70]

[67] See, for example, M. Mallet, *A White Woman Among the Masai* (London, 1923), especially 96–9.

[68] As Jane Fosbrooke proudly told her family and others, she was only the second 'wife' to live in Maasailand. Wives were not allowed to accompany their husbands assigned to Maasailand until 1934. As it was, in this period colonial officers had to complete one full tour and be hired permanently before they could marry and bring their wives back to Tanganyika. Tawney interview with J. Fosbrooke; J. Fosbrooke letters; both in J. Fosbrooke deposit, Rhodes House Library [RHL] Mss. Afr. s. 1906. I am grateful to the late Henry Fosbrooke for allowing me to read and selectively quote from Jane's letters.

[69] The rest of the letter is missing. 'Concerning Loliondo', Sept. 1934, RHL Mss. Afr. s. 1906.

[70] J. Fosbrooke, 'Loliondo', 29 Oct. 34, RHL Mss. Afr. s. 1906. Fosbrooke later reports a similar encounter by a delegation of women demanding money from another 'wife', Trude Rowe.

Like Jane, however, these Maasai women were peripheral to the expansion of male power enabled by the colonial state. In fact, the paternal paradigm in which colonial administrators cast themselves relative to Maasai – as a father to a son or an older brother to a younger brother – excluded, by definition, relations with women.[71] In effect, administrators mapped their gender ideologies on to their understandings of and interventions in Maasai life: the male domains of public and political in opposition and superior to the female domains of private and domestic.[72] Their perspective was premised on several assumptions: first, that distinct 'domestic' and 'political' domains existed; second, that they were spatially segregated; third, that the spatial distinctions between the boundaries of homesteads as 'private' domains and more communal spaces as 'public' reflected and expressed qualitative differences between the types of power exercised in each domain and fourth, that 'political' authority was primarily exercised in the public sphere and conversely that the domestic sphere entailed primarily 'private' affairs. In sum, administrators assumed that whatever men were doing must be 'important' (and, conversely, what women were doing was 'unimportant'), thus men were aligned with the public/political sphere and women with the domestic/private.

Money matters: of 'taxpayers', livestock 'owners', and household 'heads'

The demand Maasai women made for money from Jane highlight some of the other, more subtle processes and practices that contributed to the restructuring of gendered power relations and the emergence of patriarchy. While the collaboration of certain Maasai elders and colonial administrators in the creation of native 'authorities' gradually disenfranchised Maasai women from political power, the related policies and practices of monetization and commoditization displaced women from economic control through the creation and consolidation of such new categories as 'taxpayer', 'household head', livestock 'owner', 'buyer' and 'seller'.

In response to increased pressures from the metropole to incorporate colonial subjects more thoroughly into the global monetary and commodity economy in the aftermath of the Great Depression, administrators in Masai District intensified earlier efforts to promote monetization among Maasai and commoditization of their livestock and land.[73] Three practices were central to their objectives to extract more Maasai livestock and coerce Maasai men into becoming 'buyers' and 'sellers' of commodities: taxation, formalization of monetization and trading, and expansion of the formal livestock marketing infrastructure. Together, these measures combined to replace the female-dominated barter economy with a male-dominated cash

[71] See, for example, Browne (PC/NP) to CS/Dar, 15 Mar. 1926, TNA 17/37.

[72] For analyses of middle and upper class Victorian gender ideologies that informed British administrators of the time, see M. Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in mid-Victorian England* (Chicago, 1988); L. Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (New York, 1995).

[73] The passage in Britain of the Colonial Development Act of 1929 marked the ascendancy of British interest in the economic 'development' of the colonies over prior concerns with protecting native interests and preserving their 'traditional' forms of economic production, social organization and political self-governance. For an overview of British development policies during this period, see S. Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy, 1914–1940* (London, 1994).

economy and thereby enabled Maasai men to thwart women's shared and overlapping rights in livestock in order to consolidate their own rights as livestock 'owners'. Both outcomes disenfranchised women from economic control and autonomy.

Taxation was the Government's primary means of implementing a variety of overlapping policy objectives. First, administrators hoped that taxation would encourage livestock sales and thus teach Maasai men to treat livestock as commodities. Taxation was also an incentive for stock improvement, since 'stock disposal' meant 'automatic selection of the herds' and 'lessening risks of soil erosion'.[74] Secondly, taxation was supposed to encourage monetization. Thus, a 1933 proposal to collect tax in kind because of scarcity of cash in the territory was strongly opposed by Baxter, the Masai District Officer at the time:

> It is a retrogressive step and would militate against the chances of success of my present policy of education in the uses of money. The Masai must learn to use money and learn soon. His need of money to pay tax is a main incentive at the moment to induce him to bring his cattle in person to an auction where he sells for cash and is introduced to the mysteries of competition in prices, etc...[75]

This principle, as Baxter's comment suggests, was gendered: a 'taxpayer' was an adult man, and as taxpayers, Maasai men were to be taught about the mysteries of money and the market place. Circumcised Maasai men were liable to pay a poll tax for themselves and a hut tax, or 'plural wives tax' for 'dependent' women, including wives, widowed mothers and married sisters living at home. Permanent exemptions were given to Maasai men who were not 'able-bodied' and proved to have no property as well as senior elders, 'who have paid tax for many years and whose property has largely passed to their sons'.[76] Acutely aware that the plural wives tax 'places wives in the same category as taxable property', colonial administrators in Dar es Salaam occasionally urged provincial and district administrators to design alternative systems of graduated taxation. Until some viable alternative was available, however, they were unwilling to discard the plural wives tax, as it was a significant source of revenue.[77] Although collecting taxes was always a challenge, taxation facilitated the introduction of cash into Masai District by forcing Maasai men to sell rather than trade livestock.[78] In fact, from 1927 until the late 1940s, Maasai paid the highest tax rate in Tanganyika.[79]

Besides taxation, administrators also promoted monetization and commoditization through expanding the structures, opportunities and incentives

[74] Murrells (DO/MaD) to PC/NP, 7 Aug. 1931, TNA 69/47/MS.

[75] Baxter (DO/MaD) to PC/NP, 7 Aug. 1931, TNA 69/47/MS.

[76] 'Memo on Liability for Poll Tax, Masai District, 1935'; Page-Jones (DO/MaD) to PC/NP, 12 Feb. 1939; both in TNA 17/H/1/1.

[77] Kennedy (CS/Dar) to all PCs, Confidential Circular No. 10971/149, 'Native Taxation', 9 June 1937, TNA Secr 10971. See also Kennedy (CS/Dar) to all PCs, Confidential Circular No. 10971/91, 'Native Taxation,' 11 Jan. 1937, TNA Secr 10971. The plural wives tax was finally discontinued in 1950. 'Provincial Commissioner's Address to the Ol Kiama (Masai Council) on 19th Sept. 1949', TNA (Arusha Branch) 284/II.

[78] Hodgson, 'Politics of gender', esp. chs. 4–5.

[79] See the Tanganyika Blue Books from 1927–1948. Administrators justified the high rate by characterizing the large herds of these 'cattle-keeping people' as great wealth: 'as a mass the Maasai are very wealthy'. Murrells (DO/MaD) to PC/NP, 7 Aug. 1931, TNA 69/47/MS. See also Page-Jones (DO/MaD) to PC/NP, 12 Feb. 1939, TNA 17/H/1/1.

for formal trade in livestock, as well as trade in domestic and personal wares. Although a few Somalis and others had small shops scattered throughout Maasailand, most trading occurred via 'itinerant' traders who traveled from homestead to homestead bartering their wares for smallstock, cattle and hides. Maasai needed no incentives to trade; administrators acknowledged that informal traders were pervasive and welcomed by Maasai: 'some even set up shop in Masai kraals and are visited by all and sundry'.[80] But administrators disapproved of this vigorous barter economy in which Maasai women bartered milk, hides and smallstock for food, tobacco, beads, cloth and other goods.[81] First, the lack of systematic organization of the trading offended their quest for control and order; they were infuriated that 'hawkers' 'pass unobserved', 'do not observe the letter of the law' and 'were impossible to control'.[82] Second, the invisibility of such trade to colonial eyes meant that it was not only difficult to control, but impossible to tax and license. Shopkeepers paid land rent, house tax and an annual 100 shillings for a shop license. Traders who attended the cattle auctions paid an annual license fee of 50 shillings for each auction site. But itinerant traders provided no such revenue to the government. Third, an increasing concern with 'overstocking' combined with growing recognition of the economic value of Maasai livestock to the territory encouraged the promotion of livestock marketing. The logic was simple: replacing barter with cash and encouraging Maasai interest in trade goods would motivate Maasai to sell more livestock to obtain the necessary cash. Finally, barter was perceived as a more 'primitive' form of economy than cash transactions. The reluctance of Maasai men and women to conduct their transactions in cash was yet another marker, for administrators, of their backwardness and lack of progress. One aim of 'developing' them was to instill a sense of things as commodities, the value of competition and the 'natural laws' of supply and demand.

These concerns posed a dilemma to administrators: how to encourage Maasai to continue their exchange of goods with traders, but conduct these transactions indirectly through the medium of cash with 'legitimate' traders. Baxter, who served as Masai District Officer in the early 1930s and was a strong proponent of monetization, instituted several measures to formalize trading and encourage monetization. First, in order to discourage itinerant trading, all traders were required to be licensed and were soon forbidden to sell their wares except on legally-held trade plots as part of established 'trading centres' or at government-sponsored cattle auctions.[83] Secondly, a 'money campaign' was instituted throughout Maasailand in 1933 to educate Maasai men in 'money values', and replace barter with 'money exchange':

> The Masai was told that he was now living in the days of new customs; he would admit that in war his old custom of spear & shield was useless in the face of the modern gun & aeroplane: he was to learn that in peace too his old custom of trade

[80] Baxter (DO/MaD), 'Trade in Masai', 17 Aug. 1933, Masai District Book [MDB]/242.

[81] See Hodgson, 'Politics of gender', ch. 2.

[82] Baxter (DO/MaD), 'Trade in Masai', 17 Aug. 33, MDB/242.

[83] Baxter (DO/MaD), 'Trade in Masai', 17 Aug. 1933, MDB/242–245; typed addenda, 20 Nov. 1933 and 25 May 1944, MDB/244, 247; Baxter (DO/MaD), 'Trade in Loliondo', 7 Feb. 1935, Arusha Region Book [ARB]/259–260. See, generally, documents in the file 'Rights of occupancy over trading plots – Mondul', TNA 69/207/MS/17; and 'Establishment of trading centres', TNA 17/218.

by cattle was to be entirely superseded by the new custom of money exchange. He was told that his cattle were subject to numerous diseases, suffered from lack of grass and water, were victim to the lion – while the shilling knew none of these drawbacks. He might contend that the shilling could not produce its kind, but the reply is that neither does the ox or queen cow, moreover money did multiply; the name of its product was 'faida', the profit of the trader…the Masai were eventually to learn – the sooner the better for them – that the wiser plan was to retain only a moderate herd of productive stock and to convert all their unproductive beasts into ready money.[84]

Finally, administrators tried to develop schemes to control the sale of sheep and hides, the most prevalent 'currency' in the barter economy: 'such sales would only take place at regular auctions and would be subject to much the same regulations as those applied to the cattle trade to-day'.[85]

In time, these efforts to replace informal barter with cash transactions had significant consequences for Maasai gender relations. As Maasai men slowly integrated themselves, however peripherally, into the cash economy, they used their position to consolidate their exclusive rights over the disposition of cattle, gradually dispossessing women from their shared rights of control over these animals. Livestock, especially cattle, became a form of male currency, which men could buy and sell to pay their taxes, hire non-Maasai labor and occasionally purchase cloth and other goods from traders.[86] Women could generally only gain access to cash indirectly, through gifts from men or the sale of cattle through their sons or husbands. Precluded from direct involvement in the cash economy, Maasai women continued to barter where possible with the female currency of milk and hides, but female-dominated barter was eventually displaced from its central position in the pastoral economy by male-dominated cash transactions.[87]

Livestock 'development': the 'progress' of 'pastoralists'

Male control over livestock was further buttressed by livestock-related interventions during the period. Before the Second World War, livestock 'development' programs were designed to promote 'the material well-being' and 'social progress' of Maasai.[88] Although milk production and the labor of women were central to Maasai livestock production, administrators and veterinary 'experts' directed their efforts toward Maasai men as the household 'heads' and livestock 'owners'. As a result of their inattention to women (whether intentional or not), administrators and experts misconstrued the Maasai livestock production system, contributing in no small part to the repeated failure of ensuing veterinary and livestock projects. In particular, later efforts to encourage Maasai men to breed, manage and cull their herds for beef production confronted the invisible barriers of female-

[84] Baxter (DO/MaD), 'Trade in Masai', MDB/244–46. The excerpt is awkwardly worded because it is taken from Baxter's written notes.

[85] Baxter (DO/MaD), 'Loliondo Veterinary Matters', ARB/261–262.

[86] Baxter (DO/MaD), 'Trade in Masai', MDB/242.

[87] J. Fosbrooke, 'Maasai women and their work', *The Crown Colonist*, 14 (1944), 314.

[88] For analysis of the two other important development interventions during this period, water 'conservation' programs (later called water 'development'), and education see Hodgson, 'Politics of gender', chs. 3–4.

dominated and -managed milk production. These failures notwithstanding, the various livestock-related development interventions of the period provided new arenas for the exercise of male authority and control by designating men as the livestock 'experts'.

Veterinary policies during this period were closely articulated with land tenure policies: they shared a common goal of consolidating and isolating Maasai and their herds in a distinct bounded area and restricting their movement and interactions outside of that area.[89] Initially, the Veterinary Department tried to control livestock movement and disease outbreak through two principal programs: a permit system, whereby any significant movement of livestock within the reserve and all movement outside of the reserve required permits issued by veterinary officials; and the institution of quarantines, whereby all infected livestock were moved to designated quarantine areas, inoculated and kept in the area until the disease had abated. Both programs were directed at Maasai men. Men were expected to apply for permits, and men were directed to herd and keep livestock in quarantines.

Although the power of the veterinary department in debating and setting policies in Maasailand did not translate into sufficient power to implement their programs effectively, they nevertheless succeeded in disrupting Maasai herding practices and social relations.[90] Since livestock was also a key currency of Maasai social relationships, the system of permits, controls and quarantines not only disturbed Maasai transhumance patterns and routines, but threatened to disrupt the most intimate domains of Maasai social life. Not surprisingly, Maasai men resented these interventions and communicated their displeasure by avoiding inoculations, circumventing quarantine restrictions and disregarding the legal restrictions on their movements.[91]

By 1926, veterinary objectives had expanded beyond disease control and containment to include an interest in 'improving' Maasai animal husbandry practices by educating Maasai men:

> What we should try to do (and, indeed, are trying to do even now) is to make the Masai a better stock farmer (*he* is by no means bad one now) and add to the knowledge that *he* has acquired himself that knowledge which the advance of science has brought to European stock farmers. What we need to do is to teach the Masai to (a) dispose of their surplus male stock in cattle and in sheep; (b) castrate poor quality bulls and import some suitable grade bulls; (c) place on the Market the by products of their stock such as hides, ghee and to place a well produced

[89] Lowe (Senior Veterinary Officer [SVO]/NP) to PC/NP, 2 Nov. 1927, TNA 17/37.

[90] The few European veterinary staff had minimal interaction with Masai; instead, they relied on the 'veterinary guards' of the African Native Veterinary Service to implement their policies. Their enforcement abilities were severely limited by their lack of personnel and resources, the vastness of Maasailand, the lack of roads (and vehicles, initially) and mobility of Maasai and their herds even within the expanded reserve. In 1919, the veterinary staff responsible for northern Maasailand consisted of 1 (British) Veterinary Officer, two (European) Stock Inspectors, and 8 (African) veterinary guards. By 1926, the staff had increased to 1 Veterinary Officer, 2–3 Stock Inspectors, and 27 Veterinary Guards, whose responsibilities now included coverage of southern Maasailand. Hayes (SVO/NP) to PC/NP, 4 Mar. 1926, 17/37.

[91] See Hodgson, 'Politics of gender'; R. Waller and K. Homewood, 'Elders and experts: contesting veterinary knowledge in a pastoral community', in A. Cunningham and B. Andrews (eds.), *Contested Knowledge : Reactions to Western Medicine in the Modern Period* (Manchester, forthcoming).

product at that; (d) understand that the young adult males must work … and not to expect, even if they pay exceptional wages, the natives of other tribes to do their essential services.[92]

Whereas earlier administrators had perceived large Maasai herds positively as a sign of 'wealth' and successful animal husbandry practices, some administrators now inverted that reading, depicting the herds negatively as a 'problem of overstocking' and a product of the uneconomic, irrational and ignorant attitudes and practices of Maasai:

> At present the Masai is a miser of cattle. He allows his herds to increase indefinitely and will only sell sufficient slaughter stock to pay his tax and satisfy his very moderate requirements in cloth and wire. He has no idea of breeding stock for the market and very little idea of selection in breeding at all.[93]

They hoped that the institution of formal markets would encourage Maasai to sell their cattle; 'progress' in changing Maasai attitudes was carefully measured through tallies of livestock sales.[94]

The initiative to change Maasai attitudes was prompted by several forces, including the perceived failure of the veterinary department in successfully achieving its objectives and the increasing urgency with which colonial officials now concerned themselves with the 'problems' of soil erosion and water conservation.[95] Rather than admit that the inadequate water and grazing resources of Masai District were due to inequities in land distribution, administrators shifted the blame to Maasai; the problem was not scarce resources, but the wasteful, surplus livestock populations kept by Maasai. The solution was not the politically sensitive one of restructuring land rights, but a politically 'neutral' project of changing 'attitudes' and thereby practices. Indirectly enticing Maasai to sell livestock was more politically palatable than more direct methods such as compulsory destocking. Furthermore, increasing financial difficulties in the territory were shifting the perception of livestock as a source of Maasai wealth to recognition that their stock was an asset to be extricated and exploited in the interests of the colony: a source of meat for feeding urban populations, export goods (hides) and revenue (market fees, resale).[96]

The emphasis on making Maasai men better stock farmers was as powerful as the silence about Maasai women, who controlled most of the by-products administrators wished to 'place on the market'. Administrators had long recognized the lucrative possibilities of developing local milk and hide industries. Demand for milk in towns like Arusha far exceeded local supply,

[92] My emphases. Browne (PC/NP) to CS/Dar re: 'Masai Administration', 15 Mar. 1926, TNA 17/37. [93] Hayes (SVO/NP) to PC/NP, 4 Mar. 1926, TNA 17/27.

[94] The first formal stock market was organized in Arusha in 1923 with sales twice a week; other markets soon started at Kibaya and Mbulu. Total sales for 1926 were, however, minimal. 1925 Arusha District Annual Report, 10, 22. TNA Secr 1733/1: 36, 1926 Veterinary Dept. Annual Report.

[95] Governor, Minute, 22 Aug. 1926, TNA Secr 7077/3; W. Beinart, 'Soil erosion, conservationism, and ideas about development: a southern African exploration', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 11 (1984), 52–83; D. Anderson, 'Depression, dustbowl, demography and drought: the colonial state and soil conservation in East Africa during the 1930s', *African Affairs*, 82 (1984), 321–43.

[96] Veterinary Department, Tanganyika Territory, 1926 Annual Report (Dar es Salaam, 1926).

and processed milk products like butter, ghee and cheese were in demand nationally and internationally. But the production and distribution of milk was controlled by Maasai women, not Maasai men, so administrators never followed through on their ideas. Although it is unclear whether they wanted to 'protect' Maasai women from cultural change or deter them from gaining access to a profitable source of income, administrators certainly saw money and 'the market' as male domains.

Similarly, increased production of higher quality hides, a very profitable export good in high demand, became an explicit goal after the Second World War.[97] Administrators knew that Maasai women were responsible for treating and disposing of hides, although they complained that the final product was a 'low grade article'. And they recognized that 'the possibilities of the industry are great given adequate skilled instructional staff'.[98] But, despite repeated promises to demonstrate the 'correct preparation of hides' to improve 'what should be a most important export from Masailand' nothing was done.[99] Instead, provincial resources were directed at improving and expanding the hide industry among Chaga, where men controlled the process and product.[100]

The early veterinary and livestock 'development' projects of the 1920s and 1930s thus established an important and enduring precedent: Maasai men, not women, where the targets of these interventions as they were assumed to control not only cattle and smallstock, but the resources like water and pasture on which they subsisted. Administrators and experts ignored women's roles in pastoral production as well as their overlapping rights in most livestock and livestock products, and directed all of their training and access to veterinary medicines to Maasai men. Men were now able not only to assert themselves as the 'owners' of cattle, but the 'experts' on cattle as well. Women, in turn, were discouraged from exploiting the potentially valuable commodities over which they had control and through which they could have maintained their economic autonomy.

CONCLUSION: GENDER, HISTORY AND THE PATRIARCHAL PASTORALIST

Although this article examines pre-Second World War policies and practices, after the war the pace and zeal of these interventions only intensified.[101] Throughout the years, first the British government and then the Tanzanian government tried to encourage, bribe, coerce or force Maasai to perceive their cattle as commodities and sell them. The cumulative impact of the policies and practices examined in this article was significant. Gender-specific

[97] Northern Province, Tanganyika Territory, 1954 Annual Report (Dar es Salaam, 1954). [98] *Ibid.* [99] Clarke (DC/MaD), 'Masai Development Plan', 19 Apr. 51.

[100] Northern Province, Tanganyika Territory, 1955 Annual Report (Dar es Salaam, 1955).

[101] Hodgson, 'Politics of gender'; *idem*, 'Taking stock: ethnohistorical perspectives on state control, ethnic identity, and pastoralist development in Tanganyika, 1930–1961', paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association (1997); *idem*, 'Images and interventions: on the ''problems'' of ''pastoralist'' development', in D. Anderson and V. Broch-Due, '*The Poor are not us*' *: Poverty and Pastoralism in Eastern Africa* (London, forthcoming); K. Homewood, 'Development, demarcation and ecological outcomes in Maasailand', *Africa*, 65 (1995), 331–50.

taxation forced men to seek a source of cash, and monetization and commoditization made them aware of a lucrative commodity in their own midst – livestock. Furthermore, as barter was replaced by commodity purchase, men usurped women's roles as traders; instead of women bartering livestock products, men began selling livestock to meet their growing cash needs. Capitalist values, which required the alienability of a product, privileged individual male control of cattle, collapsing the multiple, overlapping use-rights of men and women in livestock into an idea of male 'ownership' of property. Veterinary services and livestock 'development' projects, directed only at men, facilitated men's appropriation of women's rights by providing new means for men to legitimate their control of livestock. In their new roles as 'taxpayers', 'property owners', 'buyers' and 'sellers', Maasai men consolidated their exclusive control of livestock and reinforced their own sense that being Maasai meant being a pastoralist. In contrast, the marginalization of women from these 'economic' categories undermined women's roles in pastoral production, dispossessed them of their rights over livestock and eroded their sense of being pastoralists.

These new forms of property relations had important consequences for gender relations. Taxation classified women as property to be paid for by men, with all the attendant associations of ownership, possession and control. In order to ensure their access to cash to pay taxes, men asserted their disposal rights over cattle. In time, the meaning of livestock changed from a store of wealth, source of food and symbol of prestige to a commodity, to be bought and sold like sugar or kerosene.

Furthermore, incorporation into the colonial state extended the formal political power of men in general and of elder men in particular. Women's access to, and participation in, political decision-making processes were curtailed, and they were relegated to the domestic concerns of home and homestead. As a result, the spatial and conceptual differences between the formerly interconnected spheres of 'domestic' and 'political'/'public' were reconfigured as gendered hierarchies.

Through these processes, the autonomy and interdependence enjoyed by men and women in the late 1800s were replaced by unequal relationships of economic dependence and political control in which men could begin to think about women as 'property' and 'possessions'. Instead of mutual respect, contemporary men and women scorn one another: men mock women as 'stupid' and 'childlike', unable to function in the male-dominated domains of economics and politics, while women complain bitterly about how men have usurped their former rights and roles. Women's most vehement critiques of men have occurred through their fierce embrace and invocation of their moral and religious authority, seen most dramatically in the spread of spirit possession.[102]

In conclusion, unlike static, ahistorical analyses of pastoral gender relations that posit women's subordination as an inherent feature of pastoralism, thereby assuming that western notions of private property and ownership are culturally and historically universal, my historical analysis demonstrates that patriarchy must be understood 'as a consequence not of cows but of history'.[103]

[102] Hodgson, 'Embodying'. [103] B. Kettel, 'Commoditization of women', 49.

SUMMARY

This article explores the question of how pastoralist women come to be thought of as 'property', as 'possessions' 'owned' and controlled by men. Based on ethnohistorical research among Maasai in Tanzania, it demonstrates that contemporary gender relations among pastoralists, which many scholars have described as 'patriarchal' because of the political and economic domination of women by men are not inherent to pastoralism as a mode of production or ideology, but the result of a historically particular constellation of interactions involving both British and Maasai ideas and practices. The paper traces the emergence of 'patriarchy' among Maasai to two interrelated processes central to colonial state formation: the division of the complementary, interconnected responsibilities of men and women into the spatially separated, hierarchically gendered domains of 'domestic' and 'public'/'political', and the consolidation of male control over cattle through the commodification of livestock, monetization of the Maasai economy and targeting of men for livestock development interventions. Incorporation into the state system reinforced and enhanced male political authority and economic control by expanding the bases for political power and introducing new forms of property relations. Together, these processes shifted the contours of male-female power relations, resulting in the material disenfranchisement and conceptual devaluation of Maasai women as both women and pastoralists.